

Sublet Mine No. 6  
East of County Road 306  
3 Miles North of U.S. Highway 189  
Kemmerer vicinity  
Lincoln County  
Wyoming

HAER No. WY-54

HAER  
WYO  
12-KEMM.V  
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

MEASURED DRAWING

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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD  
SUBLET MINE NO. 6

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I. INTRODUCTION

Location: Willow Creek Valley, three miles north of intersection of U.S. Highway 189 and County Road 306, north of Kemmerer, Lincoln County, Wyoming

Quad: Sublet

UTM: Zone 12 538995 to 539180 m E  
4638690 to 4638850 m N

Date of Construction: 1913

Present Owner: P & M Coal Company  
Kemmerer, Wyoming

Present Use: Abandoned; surface mine site is to be reclaimed in fall, 1993

Significance: This site contains distinctive remnants of the coal mine that represent the broader state and regional historic themes of mining and ethnicity. In its technology and operation and in its workforce composition it reflected the larger pattern of coal mining in the area.

Historian: Michael Cassity, High Country  
Historians, July 1993

Sublet Mine No. 6 was representative of coal mines in southwest Wyoming in the early years of the twentieth century in its construction and technology, in its economic performance, and in the ethnic composition of its work force. It was but one of a cluster of coal mines in the area surrounding modern Kemmerer. Most of the mines and the camps and towns that served them have faded and their names are only to be found in local memories and old, obscure documents. They included Susie, Gomer, Frontier, Elkol, Cumberland, Conroy, Blazon, Diamondville, Oakley, and others, including, of course, Sublet. The boom passed for most of these mines when depression hit in the twenties and thirties and even more when the technology of mining shifted from these underground mines to open pit mining. Well after production ceased in those mines and the portals and hoists and tipples began their process of decay, their presence receded more and more into obsolescence. Their remains now constitute odd reminders of a day more removed by social change than the years would hint but also as important artifacts from which a closer understanding of the forces shaping the history of this region, and indeed of the state, can be gathered.

## II. HISTORICAL SETTING

Coal mining in southwestern Wyoming came early in the relative terms of the development of the territory. With the construction of the Union Pacific Railroad in 1868 and 1869, the railroad company vigorously sought local supplies of fuel. White trappers, explorers, and emigrants for some time previous to this had observed and sometimes used the coal deposits but systematic production of the resource for more than local consumption was not possible until transportation and markets afforded different circumstances. The railroad provided that opportunity. Immediately a series of mines in the Rock Springs area opened, with their construction and operation in the hands of the Union Pacific Coal Company.<sup>1</sup> While exploitation of the coal deposits along the railroad increased in the remaining third of the nineteenth century, and while virtually every part of the state could boast at least some coal mining, that activity was most

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<sup>1</sup>A. Dudley Gardner and Verla R. Flores, Forgotten Frontier: A History of Wyoming Coal Mining (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989), 9-29; David Smith, "An Economic History of the Coal Industry of Southwestern Wyoming, 1868 to 1965" (M.A. Thesis, University of Wyoming, 1966), 13-16.

intense in the area adjacent to the railroad.

North of the railroad in the southwest corner of Wyoming, the coal in the Hams Fork River area had been noted as early as 1842 by John C. Fremont, but it was not being mined in a systematic manner. Small mines, called wagon mines, were operated intermittently by individuals for local consumption and, as historian Dudley Gardner concluded, "were a common sight wherever coal was available."<sup>2</sup> Because of the minimal capital investment, these wagon mines sometimes endured well into the twentieth century, but the large corporations quickly overshadowed them and introduced very much different mining technology for massive extraction of the coal.

In 1897, after several years of planning and negotiation, veteran mine operator Patrick J. Quealy formed an economic arrangement with Pennsylvania financier Mahlon S. Kemmerer that led to the development of the Kemmerer mines.<sup>3</sup> The Kemmerer Coal Company began in 1897 with the development of the Frontier mine and the company town of Frontier just north of Kemmerer, a town where individuals could own real property.<sup>4</sup> The extension of the Oregon Short Line Railroad to Frontier at the beginning of the mine's production also meant an outlet for the coal extracted. The Kemmerer Coal Company, one of three major companies in the vicinity (the others being the Union Pacific Coal Company and the Diamond Coal and Coke Company) easily established its substantial operations and began to expand from its base No. 1 Mine at Frontier. In 1901 it had opened its No. 3 mine also at Frontier.<sup>5</sup> But it particularly began to view the coal beds to the north in the Willow Creek valley.<sup>6</sup> And there in 1908 the No. 4 Mine (Susie) began to operate, and No. 5 (Sublet) opened

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<sup>2</sup>Gardner and Flores, Forgotten Frontier, 62-64.

<sup>3</sup>Glen Barrett, Kemmerer, Wyoming: The Founding of an Independent Coal Town, 1897-1902 (Kemmerer, WY, 1975), 9-13.

<sup>4</sup>Barrett, Kemmerer, Wyoming, 15-48; "Childhood Days in Early Kemmerer," Works Progress Administration interview with Mrs. Iona Piper, WPA Collection, Wyoming Historical Research and Publications, Cheyenne, Wyoming; and "Early Days in Kemmerer, Wyoming," Works Progress Administration interview with Mrs. A. M. King, WPA Collection, Wyoming Department of Commerce, Historical Research Division, Cheyenne, Wyoming.

<sup>5</sup>Smith, "Economic History of the Coal Industry," 104.

<sup>6</sup>S. F. Emmons and E. C. Eckel, "Contributions to Economic Geology, 1905," U.S. Geological Survey, Bulletin No. 285, 1906, 337.

also in 1908.<sup>7</sup> Demand for coal seemed to be increasing inexorably. Clearly the Kemmerer Coal Company had launched its expansion in a period of boom for the coal industry. That boom would last until World War I, but in the early 1920s, a downward movement set in. The following prices received by the Kemmerer Coal Company per ton of coal indicate the general contours of that boom.

1906:	\$0.77
1907:	\$1.17
1908:	\$1.60
1909:	\$1.60
1910:	\$1.59
1911:	\$1.62
1912:	\$1.61
1913:	\$1.60
1914:	\$1.69
1915:	\$1.74
1916:	\$1.70
1917:	\$2.14
1918:	\$2.59
1919:	\$2.69
1920:	\$3.27
1921:	\$3.44
1922:	\$3.45
1923:	\$3.20
1924:	\$2.92
1925:	\$3.19
1926:	\$3.18
1927:	\$3.19
1928:	\$2.95 <sup>8</sup>

### III. DEVELOPMENT OF SUBLET MINE NO. 6

In late September, 1913, Roy Bosworth, a bookkeeper for the Kemmerer Coal Company and the town clerk for the company town of Sublet, Wyoming, visited Kemmerer and reported on the activities at that community. Among other things he reported that "activity

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<sup>7</sup>Smith, "Economic History of the Coal Industry," 104; Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of Wyoming, 1909, 9. Willow Creek Mine No. 4 of the Kemmerer Coal Company was renamed Susie after the wife of Patrick J. Quealy by 1910. Alice Antilla, First One Hundred Years of Coal Mining: Hams Fork, Kemmerer, Lincoln County ([Kemmerer, Wyoming, 1983]).

<sup>8</sup>Smith, "Economic History of the Coal Industry," 105.

and prosperity at Sublet are the real things and that the payrolls are increasing regularly, over 250 men being employed at Sublet, while over 125 are now working at the new camp of the Kemmerer Coal Co.--No. 6."<sup>9</sup> While people in the area were aware of this new development, and indeed it plainly had been planned well beforehand, perhaps with a prospect as early as 1905, this was the first time that activity at No. 6 mine reached the newsprint. Indeed, at this point the mine had not hit full production; the workers there were active building the surface infrastructure to support the mining activities and digging the slopes and entries of the mine underground.

A month later another hint of activity surfaced when the Kemmerer Camera noted that James Dodge of the city moved his family to the mining camp at No. 6 where he would be assuming responsibilities for the commissary operated by the Kemmerer Coal Company.<sup>10</sup>

Despite the limits of the vague reports and hints of activity at Sublet No. 6 reported in the local newspapers, the pattern of construction at the mine can be discerned in unpublished accounts. The State Mine Inspector visited the mine during its 1913 construction. On April 17, 1913, George Blacker, Coal Mine Inspector, District #1, made a quarterly inspection of the mine. At that time, even though the mine was working in some parts, the only ventilation available was through natural flows of air. He suggested that "a small furnace be installed until the fan is ready to operate." A furnace strategically situated would create a draft to bring air through the mine. The manway and slope were just then being driven and only thirty-five men were employed. By the end of July, at his next inspection, he reported that sixty-two men were working and anticipated that the new fan would be in operation in a few days.<sup>11</sup>

The State Mine Inspector's report for the year ending September 30, 1913, provided additional information about Sublet No. 6. It said, "This mine is still under construction," and included specifics about the configuration of the mine. The seam of coal that it proposed to excavate was the Kemmerer seam, the same that was being mined at No. 1 and No. 3. That seam was about seven feet wide (high) and proceeded into the earth at about a twenty degree angle due west.

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<sup>9</sup>Kemmerer Camera, October 1, 1913.

<sup>10</sup>Kemmerer Camera, November 12, 1913.

<sup>11</sup>Quarterly reports, #6 Mine, Coal Mine Inspector, District #1, April 17, 1913; July 24, 1913; Box 28, Kemmerer Coal Company Mine Inspections Reports, 1904-1918, John L. Kemmerer, Jr., Collection, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.

On the surface of the mine was the machinery and support system to operate the underground system and to process the coal for shipment. The mine inspector noted that of the four slopes, three had concrete and stone approaches. Those were the manway, the main slope, and the air course. The fourth slope was left undeveloped and was presumably used only to supply additional ventilation. Several structures were already evident on the surface of the mine. A fan house had been installed. Inside that building was a ten foot Stevens fan that would draw the air through the entire mine. The slopes entered the mine from the west side of a small valley created by Willow Creek. Aside from the approaches to the slopes, the only structure at that time on the west side was the fan house. Across the valley, facing the mine openings, was an engine house. The mine inspector noted that "the engine house and boiler room is built entirely of stone and steel, and everything is being made as near fire proof as possible." Still under construction, ("and when completed will be one of the best equipped mines in the State") the mine nonetheless employed 102 people at the time of that report.<sup>12</sup>

Fuller information about Sublet Mine No. 6 appeared in a year end newspaper summary of local mining activity:

The new No. 6 mine is located on the Sublet branch about half a mile this side of the Sublet tippie, and at the point designated Quealy by the railroad maps. This is one of the promising properties, and while work has only been commenced there in the past year the main slope is down 1200 feet with six entries and the necessary air courses broken off. About 150 men are being employed here, with the output of about 600 tons daily. Eighteen houses have been erected, which together with the mine and other company buildings, gives it the appearance of a prosperous mining camp. The equipment being installed here is of the most modern in the state, while all the mine entrances and fans are of concrete and iron, the same as the other mines of this company, and are fireproof. The tippie is of iron covering, while a stone and iron boiler house, 105 x 38 feet, and a 40 x 10 blacksmith shop have also been completed.<sup>13</sup>

This account suggests again the modern, up-to-date nature of the equipment and construction. It also indicates that by the end of

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<sup>12</sup>Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of Wyoming, 1913, 9.

<sup>13</sup>Kemmerer Camera, December 10, 1913.

the year the slopes had penetrated the earth even more deeply and with apparently another pair of entries added. The tipple and blacksmith shop are additional structures mentioned, but the store which James Dodge had recently started to operate is not mentioned. Of the eighteen houses constructed no further detail is provided.

Shortly after this account, in January 1914, the mine inspector reported that the fan was operating successfully with an intake of 60,000 cubic feet per minute at the source and a return of 64,000 cubic feet at the fan where the air exited the mine. By that time 153 men worked the mine.<sup>14</sup>

Sublet Mine No. 6 had reached by the end of 1913 and the beginning of 1914 a point close to full operation. It is in the nature of such a mine, however, to continually upgrade equipment, change technologies, and expand facilities. Thus the mine continued to develop almost until the point that it closed.

A tipple is a necessary part of a coal mine since it serves to separate the coal into different sizes for shipment. When the newspaper account reported that the "tipple is of iron covering" it did not indicate if it was actually operational. Some evidence suggests that it may not have been completely assembled until perhaps April of 1914. In an unsigned report to P. J. Quealy in Miami in the spring of 1914, a company official reported that "the shaker screens, engines, are all completed ready for operation with the exception of a couple of days work on the feeder. The re-screening shaker is completed as far as we can go." Some parts of the equipment had not arrived and the company had to await them before progressing on the tipple.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, the tipple may still have been in construction in the summer. On July 30, 1914, Thomas Nickols was killed by a chute accidentally catching a timber at the tipple and throwing him twenty-nine feet to the ground where his head struck the railroad track. The fatal movement of the chute may have been as part of the construction process, although more likely, given the previous report of spring, this was a routine adjustment in

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<sup>14</sup>Quarterly reports, #6 Mine, Coal Mine Inspector, District #1, April 17, 1913; July 24, 1913; January 15, 1914; Box 28, Kemmerer Coal Company Mine Inspection Reports, 1904-1918, John L. Kemmerer, Jr., Collection, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.

<sup>15</sup>Unsigned letter to Mr. P. J. Quealy, March 6, 1914, Box 28, Kemmerer Coal Company Mine Inspection Reports, 1904-1918, John L. Kemmerer, Jr., Collection, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.



tipple operation.<sup>16</sup>

Although Quealy's unsigned correspondent in the spring of 1914 reported "Hoisting engine is working very nicely," this is the first mention of one of the most prominent aspects of the mine. Across the valley from the main slope a set of tracks carried the cars loaded with coal out of the haulage, over a trestle across Willow Creek and up to the tipple. To pull this enormous burden a powerful hoist was installed in its own building high above and facing the haulage. In 1916 the State Mine Inspector's report indicated that hoisting was done by a 24" x 48" direct motion Vulcan hoist, although it is not clear if this hoist was the same that had been initially installed.<sup>17</sup>

Further developments at the mine added to and replaced the initial structure. Within the mines in 1917 another change came. In that year locomotive haulage was installed inside the mines.<sup>18</sup> This reduced the need for horses to pull the coal cars on the entries. In 1915 the mine employed three drivers.<sup>19</sup> Up to and even into 1918, the mine had routinely used from seven to fifteen head of livestock.<sup>20</sup> William Harris, a veteran of other Kemmerer Coal Company mines, but not Sublet No. 6, in an interview recalled the shift from horses to locomotives in those other mines. He recalled that one horse would pull four or five cars

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<sup>16</sup>Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of Wyoming, 1914, 16.

<sup>17</sup>Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of Wyoming, 1918, 22.

<sup>18</sup>Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of Wyoming, 1917, 6.

<sup>19</sup>Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of Wyoming, 1915, 20.

<sup>20</sup>Quarterly report, #6 Mine, Coal Mine Inspector, District #1, January 18, 1918, Governor Frank Houx Collection, Wyoming State Departmental Correspondence, State Mine Inspector (1918), Wyoming State Archives, Cheyenne; Quarterly reports, #6 Mine, Coal Mine Inspector, District #1, January 15, 1914; September 29, 1914; October 18, 1915; October 15, 1917; January 14, 1916; Box 28, Kemmerer Coal Company Mine Inspection Reports, 1904-1918, John L. Kemmerer, Jr., Collection, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming. The expenses for maintaining the livestock can be found in the Mine Operating Expenses ledgers, Kemmerer Coal Company, Wyoming Department of Commerce, Historical Research Division Collections. These ledgers include stable expenses for No. 6, 1913-1917, 1917-1918, with feed and services itemized monthly; in 1918 it is referred to as No. 6 Mine Barn.

along the entries to the slope where they would be hitched to the hoist to be taken out of the mine. The locomotives that the Kemmerer Coal Company switched to in those other mines, and likely at Sublet No. 6, were electrically driven through a trolley arrangement that connected one wire to the track and one wire overhead on the roof. In some instances, however, battery powered locomotives were used, especially in those entries with a very low overhead.<sup>21</sup> In either case, the change was complete and beginning with 1918, the annual reports indicated that "motor haulage to slope" was the system used at No. 6.<sup>22</sup>

The source of power indicates an even more profound change. In 1915 the state mine inspector reported that the source of power at the mine was steam.<sup>23</sup> Other reports also indicated that the mine generated its own power, on-site, at the structure known variously as the steam plant, the boiler house, or the engine house. In 1918, however, the power source shifted from the on-site steam generator to an electrical generator located at Frontier. In that year the mine inspector reported: "Power is furnished at Frontier by two 500 K. W. generators direct connected respectively to Steam Turbines. Initial voltage 2300, 3 phase, 60 cycles. Voltage is stepped up at the power station to 13,000 and transmitted to No. 5 where current is transformed to 2300 and distributed to Nos. 5 and 6 Mines, and used at 2300 and 220 volts."<sup>24</sup> This meant two significant changes. One was that greater power was now available for the mine. The second change was that the boiler at the mine no longer generated

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<sup>21</sup>Oral Interview with Mr. and Mrs. William Harris, in A. Dudley Gardner and Bob Rosenberg, Archaeological and Historical Survey of 26 Mine Reclamation Sites in Uinta and Lincoln Counties, Wyoming, Western Wyoming College Archaeological Services, Rock Springs, Wyoming, Cultural Resources Management Report No. 13, April 1984, 191-193.

<sup>22</sup>Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of Wyoming, 1918, 22.

<sup>23</sup>Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of Wyoming, 1915, 22.

<sup>24</sup>Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of Wyoming, 1918, 22. This is also suggested in an interview with William Harris who noted that around 1919 the Frontier Mine No. 1 began to generate the electricity for other Kemmerer Coal Company mines. Gardner and Rosenberg, Interview with William Harris, 189-190.

electricity. It was used only for heating purposes.<sup>25</sup>

In 1921 the mine's underground operations enlarged considerably by extending two entries 6800 feet to the south. This extension connected two separate operations, the mine to the south being known as No. 6 South. While separate surface machinery and structures served aspects of that distant operation, the coal mined was, for a while, transported by an underground railroad of thirty cars powered by electric locomotive to the No. 6 main slope. After this point the development of the mine's surface structure yielded at No. 6 to expansion of facilities at No. 6 South.<sup>26</sup>

The only additions made to Sublet Mine No. 6 after this were a new, larger hoist motor and a new rooming house capable of lodging thirty-five men in 1926.<sup>27</sup> By June, 1927, the mine lay idle, never to produce again.

#### IV. TECHNOLOGY AND OPERATION OF SUBLET MINE NO. 6

Sublet Mine No. 6 was similar to other mines in the area, especially those other mines operated by Kemmerer Coal Company. In each instance a sophisticated organization of resources and technology combined surface and subterranean activity.

The mine was constructed in the same way as other Kemmerer Coal Company mines and that included two related aspects of the mine's development and operation. First was its underground

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<sup>25</sup>Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of Wyoming, 1921, 26.

<sup>26</sup>Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of Wyoming, 1921, 26-27. The surface equipment at No. 6 South became the equal or superior to that at No. 6 itself: "The surface equipment consists of engine house, fan house, blacksmith shop, barn, transformer station, heating plant, two 2-story rooming houses 24' x 48' having 16 rooms each, a two-story hotel 26' x 40' with dining room capacity of 60 people at one time and rooms on the second floor for hotel operator and help, a bath house with six showers and 75 elevating hangers. All buildings are electric lighted, steam heated and connected with water. The water main is carried into the mine through the fan shaft for sprinkling and fire protection and surface hydrants have been installed at convenient points."

<sup>27</sup>Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of Wyoming, 1926, 6; undated report indicating improvements at No. 6 Mine for 1926, State of Wyoming, Mine Inspector Records, Inspection Reports, Wyoming State Archives.

construction. The key to this was a series of "four parallel slopes driven on the pitch, with level entries driven right and left off the main slope."<sup>28</sup> Slopes were essentially tunnels, although the word tunnel seldom finds its way into mining parlance, and these slopes intersected with and followed the seam of coal into the earth. At intervals of about three hundred feet, other tunnels called entries extended to the right and left of the main slope. At the time of the initial 1913 report, two pair of entries had been made, but ultimately Sublet No. 6 would have four sets of entries, the fourth being the entry that would connect to Sublet No. 6 South. This network of tunnels formed an underground grid in the seam of coal itself that served the needs of transportation and ventilation.

The second key to the operation of the mine was how the coal actually would be extracted. Even before the completion of the mine, the Mine Inspector reported on the method and system to be used. He reported that the system of mining the coal would be "shooting off the solid, and the method of working will be room and pillar."<sup>29</sup> Indeed each subsequent annual inspection report indicated that this was the method used. The 1925 report indicates that shortwall mining machinery was being installed, but it was not precise if this was at No. 5 or No. 6, or both. The room and pillar system combined with "shooting off the solid." This system was common in the area--indeed in the United States--and meant that miners would go down into the mine on a slope called the manway and then exit the manway to the right or left into the entries on their way to their work places. At their work places they would use explosives to force the coal from its solid state ("shooting off the solid"). Notably, however, this would be done by working uphill, back toward the surface from which they had entered. In this manner the loosened coal chunks could be shoveled onto chutes of sheet metal that would, by force of gravity, drop them into cars that traveled the entries. The excavated coal would thus carve a "room" from the coal seam where the miner would continue to work. Pillars of coal would be left unmined at intervals to support the roof and would be augmented by timbers (the ubiquitous "props") to prevent the roof from collapsing.<sup>30</sup> With the introduction of what was

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<sup>28</sup> Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of Wyoming, 1913, 9.

<sup>29</sup> Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of Wyoming, 1913, 9.

<sup>30</sup> Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of 1909, 9. Compare this mining process with the similar processes in Iowa's mines at the same time in Dorothy Schwieder, Black Diamonds: Life and Work in Iowa's Coal Mining Communities, 1895-

known as shortwall mining machinery, which might have found its way into Sublet No. 6 in the final years of the operation of the mine, the basic principle remained the same, except that a machine would be employed to remove the dirt and rock floor beneath the coal, undercutting it, so that less powder was required and holes for the explosive did not have to be drilled so deep. By positioning the chute in regard to the undercut, loading the loosened coal could also be helped. William Harris, veteran Kemmerer Coal Company miner, explained the process of removal of the coal with chutes:

They'd drive up these rooms and in the rooms they'd lay these sheet irons. They sheet ironed about four feet wide and eight feet long. They'd lay these all the way up the room, right up to the coal. They'd even push them underneath the coal. They had what they called wings. They'd take a sheet iron and put it off up in the corner of the coal. Another off this way, one in the center. They'd get all this sheet iron shoved up under that coal. And when they shot that baby, you better get out of the road. Because she'd all start to move. Down that chute she'd go.<sup>31</sup>

The coal itself would leave the rooms initially in cars pulled by horses and after 1917-1918 in cars pulled by electric powered locomotives through the entries to the main slope where they would be attached to the hoist and pulled out the main slope, otherwise known as the haulage or, simply, the slope. The strings of cars were known as trips. The entries were level but the grade of the slope, in this instance eighteen to twenty degrees, would be too steep for stock to pull the loaded cars out. When horses were used they wore leather shields on the tops of their heads to ward off blows from the timbers.<sup>32</sup>

At least one other slope would be dedicated to ventilation. In his 1914 annual report, the state coal mine inspector put it bluntly: "By far the most important factor in coal mining is

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1925 (Ames, Iowa, 1983), 27-58 and with the anthracite operations of a Pennsylvania community in Anthony F. C. Wallace, St. Clair: A Nineteenth-Century Coal Town's Experience with a Disaster Prone Industry (New York, 1987), 7-53. I am especially indebted to Linda Simnacher for assisting me with the operational features of the mine.

<sup>31</sup>Gardner and Rosenberg, Interview with William Harris, 193-194.

<sup>32</sup>Gardner and Rosenberg, Interview with William Harris, 192.

ventilation, so that those engaged in such work shall be supplied during their hours of labor, with sufficient air to maintain health and safety."<sup>33</sup> He also noted that many of the mines in the district "are fully five miles in a straight line in length, with laterals more than a mile on either side" and that "the question of adequate ventilation becomes a problem quite difficult and expensive to solve." Even so he found that electric fans in the mines were moving 75,000 to 150,000 cubic feet of air per minute through the mines, twenty-four hours a day. In Sublet Mine No. 6, the air did not move quite so forcefully. The Stevens ten-foot fan mounted in the fan house, the farthest north structure on the west side of the valley, was placed to pull the air through the other slopes and entries (with overcasts and undercasts of concrete at the intersections of the slopes and entries to direct the flow of air). In January, 1918, state coal mine inspector George Blacker measured the flow of air at Sublet No. 6 at 52,965 cubic feet per minute at the intake, where the air would flow into the mine, and 61,740 cubic feet per minute on the return to the outside. Six months later the volume had increased at intake to 66,150 and at return to 69,000.<sup>34</sup> That measure was about normal for this mine. The lowest measure recorded is that for October, 1915 when the intake was 49,561 cubic feet per minute and the return was 51,975 cubic feet per minute. The highest measure documented was that for September, 1914 when the flow hit 73,000 cubic feet per minute at intake and 77,000 at return.<sup>35</sup>

Once the coal was brought to the surface, the hoist continued to carry the cars to the tippie. The hoist itself was located directly opposite the slope with the long steel cables called ropes reaching down into the mine and then wrapped around a spindle in the hoist house as it pulled the cars to it. The tracks from the haulage continued, leading to the tippie which was adjacent to offset from the tracks below the hoist house. At the tippie, the coal would be dumped from the cars onto screens where it was separated into four grades: lump, nut, pea, and slack. Then the separated coal was loaded onto railroad cars for

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<sup>33</sup>Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of Wyoming, 1914, 5.

<sup>34</sup>Quarterly inspection reports, Mine No. 6, January 18, 1918; July 20, 1918; Governor Frank Houx Collection, Wyoming State Departmental Correspondence, State Mine Inspector, Wyoming State Archives.

<sup>35</sup>Quarterly reports, #6 Mine, Coal Mine Inspector, District #1, October 18, 1915; September 29, 1914; Box 28, Kemmerer Coal Company Mine Inspections Reports, 1904-1918, John L. Kemmerer, Jr., Collection, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.

shipment on the Oregon Short Line Railroad.<sup>36</sup>

In the technology associated with Sublet Mine No. 6, the principles were not that far removed from the primitive wagon mines operated earlier. What was different, however, was the power and the machinery that could be manipulated to bring the coal to the surface and to process it for shipment, all in vast quantities.

#### V. LIFE AND LABOR AT SUBLET MINE NO. 6

Life in the coal mines holds a distinctive place in American cultural history and in the history of American workers as well as in American engineering and economic history. Dark and dangerous is not an exaggerated assessment of the work performed in the coal mines. As the experience of workers at Sublet Mine No. 6 reveals, however, there was more to their experience.

The most striking feature of the work force at Sublet No. 6 was its ethnicity. This polyglot force was noted even by the mine inspector in his 1915 report when he commented that the majority of mine workers in the district were foreigners who did not understand English.<sup>37</sup> Sublet Mine No. 6 was reflective of this diverse ethnic work force. In the Kemmerer Coal Company collection of documents in the Historical Research Division of the Wyoming Department of Commerce is an undated list of employees of Sublet Mine No. 6 that divides them into nationality groups. Of the 112 workers named, those identified as "Americans" total fourteen. The largest groups were those from Italy (twenty-nine) and those from Japan (twenty-three). After that Austrian (nineteen) and Polish (twelve) workers were followed by workers from Finland (four), Spain (four), Syria (three), Germany (one), Mexico (one), Montenegro (one), and

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<sup>36</sup>Kemmerer Camera, October 6, 1916. William Harris indicated some variation in the sizing of coal by the Kemmerer Coal Company with an alternative set of terms: lump, net, tea, and slack, and as he said: "Oh, they used to have all different sizes." The four basic categories of size, if not terminology, remained constant. Gardner and Rosenberg, Interview with William Harris, 194.

<sup>37</sup>Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of Wyoming, 1915, 5. Also cf. Gardner, Forgotten Frontier, who discusses ethnicity in the coal mines and towns as a recurrent theme of mining in Wyoming.

Russia (one).<sup>38</sup> A comparison of the names on this list with other names associated with the mine is inconclusive, but the list had to have been prepared prior to 1920.

In the powder house explosion and fire of 1920, there is another sampling of the work force. The eight victims of that accident included two Italians, one German, one Austrian, one "Polish American," one Korean, one Japanese, and one "Finlander." The closest person to being identified as "American," as in the employment list above, was Matt Wisniewski, the "Polish American."<sup>39</sup> Aside from the fact that these workers in the mines could likely not talk much with each other because of language differences, the safety implications of the language barriers were substantial. Nonetheless, there often appeared to be a commonality of culture at least in its exchange as different groups celebrated different holidays, inviting the others to the occasion. There is, however, an obvious omission from this list of ethnic groups. When asked if there were any black workers in the company, William Harris responded: "Had one. That's the only one I remember and he lived up here [in Frontier]."<sup>40</sup>

The next most salient fact of life in the mines, was the danger. Accidents were routine. Fatal accidents were not uncommon. Death from the explosion of a shot that had not detonated before the miner returned to the workplace, from the fall of rock, from the fall of coal either from the roof or from the work face, from falling under the string of coal cars (called a trip), from being thrown from the tippie, and from an explosion at the powder house all claimed lives in the course of work at Sublet Mine No. 6. The following fatalities can be documented from the annual mine inspector published reports:

July 30, 1914: Charles Nickols, American, fifty-four, married, with two children. Nickols died while raising a chute at No. 6 tippie; the chute caught the timber upon which Nickols was standing, the rope holding the timber broke, and Nickols was thrown twenty-nine feet to the ground, striking his head on the railroad track below.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>Undated "List of Men on Pay Roll (Subdivided as to Nativity,)" H86-13, Kemmerer Coal Company Collection, Wyoming Department of Commerce, Historical Research Collections Division, Cheyenne.

<sup>39</sup>Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of Wyoming, 1920, 41.

<sup>40</sup>Gardner and Rosenberg, Interview with William Harris, 207.

<sup>41</sup>Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of Wyoming, 1914, 16.



September 28, 1915: Paul Bertie, Austrian, forty-six years old, and married. He and his partner had drilled, loaded, and lit the fuse and gone on to the entry to await the explosion. Although they thought they heard the shot explode and returned to work at the face of the coal, the shot went off after they returned, killing Bertie.<sup>42</sup>

December 5, 1915: William Hendrickson, Finlander, forty-five years old, with wife and one child. Although his room was well timbered with props, "he was making place to set two more props when the rock fell, killing him."<sup>43</sup>

November 23, 1916: Theo. Crise, Italian, thirty-six years old, single. While working in a room, he lit the fuse to his shot and went onto the entry. After waiting and hearing a shot explode he returned to his room when his own shot exploded, injuring him so that he died November 30, 1916.<sup>44</sup>

January 10, 1917: S. Munesada, Japanese, forty-five years old, married with two children. Rock fell on him, killing him.<sup>45</sup>

March 20, 1917: Ossi Anderson, Finlander, twenty-four years old, single. Anderson was a rope-rider, the individual who rode the hoist cable pulling the cars into and out of the mine, and who controlled the trips. Anderson was moving from the fourth entry to the third on the trip with the intention of jumping off at the third entry. Somehow he jumped early, seventy-five feet below the third entry and fell back under the trip.<sup>46</sup>

June 30, 1917: Philip Torgosh, Polish, fifty-three years old, with a wife and one child. Torgosh and his partner mistook another shot for theirs and returned to their room and Torgosh

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<sup>42</sup>Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of Wyoming, 1915, 13.

<sup>43</sup>Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of Wyoming, 1916, 26.

<sup>44</sup>Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of Wyoming, 1916, 13.

<sup>45</sup>Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of Wyoming, 1917, 15.

<sup>46</sup>Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of Wyoming, 1917, 18.

was at the working face when the shot exploded, killing him.<sup>47</sup>

March 6, 1918: Dom Penolio, Italian, forty years old, single. Penolio was a shot inspector who was setting a prop to hang some brattice--the canvas that would help direct the flow of air--near the face of an entry when a large rock fell. Ordinarily one could "sound" the rock with a tap on the roof to tell if the roof was loose; "the rock was of such size that it was impossible to sound to determine whether or not same was safe."<sup>48</sup>

November 23, 1918: Mike Polirio, Mexican, forty-one years old. He started to drill a hole in some top coal which was loose; the coal separated and fell on him. Polirio died December 8, 1918.<sup>49</sup>

February 28, 1919: John Goun, Japanese, forty-six years old, single. While crossing his room chute he slipped and fell into the chute and hit a prop he had placed across the chute to catch or hold coal, hitting his stomach severely. He died March 3, 1919.<sup>50</sup>

May 29, 1920: Thomas Boam, English, with a wife and one child under sixteen years. He and his son were working as partners in a room and had fired a shot the previous evening. The coal had been loosened, but still adhered to the working face. When the senior Boam tried to loosen the coal and pull it down, it fell over on him, killing him. The piece of coal was estimated to weigh 1200 pounds.<sup>51</sup>

July 26, 1920:

B. M. Shin, Korean, thirty-seven years old, single;

Nomini Robert, Italian, thirty-five years old, single;

Matt Wisniewski, Polish American, eighteen years old,  
single;

F. G. Kempfenkel, German thirty-one years old, wife and 3

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<sup>47</sup>Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of Wyoming, 1917, 22.

<sup>48</sup>Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of Wyoming, 1918, 31.

<sup>49</sup>Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of Wyoming, 1918, 31.

<sup>50</sup>Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of Wyoming, 1919, 32.

<sup>51</sup>Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of Wyoming, 1920, 39.

children under 16 years;  
Steve Weber, Austrian, fifty-two years old, married (wife living in Austria);  
John Perolio, Italian, thirty-four years old, single;  
T. Emagawa, Japanese, thirty-three years old, single;  
Alfred Noukki, Finlander, forty-three years old, single.

These eight men were killed in a single explosion at the powder house, located "a considerable distance south of the mine."  
"The miners, on returning to the surface at quitting time, take their empty powder bottles to the magazine, have them filled by a man employed for that purpose and then return to the mine mouth with loaded bottles and deposit them in a powder box, from which place the Company delivers them to their respective owners in the mine. It was while the eight men in question were standing at the powder magazine door awaiting to have their cans filled that the explosion took place . . . ." The conclusion of the investigation into the explosion was that a spark ignited the powder when a wooden mallet or hammer was used to puncture the top of the powder keg.<sup>52</sup>

February 20, 1923: T. Hashimoto, forty-five years old, married with one child under sixteen years. Killed by fall of coal.<sup>53</sup>

January 6, 1926: Joe Kusmirik, unspecified age and family status. Killed by fall of coal; shot had failed to bring down a piece about eighteen inches thick until he was under it.<sup>54</sup>

These twenty-one men died in a mine that operated around thirteen years. Nine of them died on the surface of the mine and the others in the haulage or entries and rooms. As if the deaths in this one mine were not grim enough reminder of the dangers of the technology and operation, news of accidents in neighboring mines provided reinforcement. On September 16, 1924, thirty-nine miners died in a gas explosion in nearby Sublet Mine No. 5.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of Wyoming, 1920, 5-6, 41.

<sup>53</sup>Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of Wyoming, 1923, 21.

<sup>54</sup>Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of Wyoming, 1926, 32.

<sup>55</sup>Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of Wyoming, 1924, 18-22; see also the account in Lorenzo Groutage, Wyoming Mine Run (Salt Lake City, 1981), 71-89.

The long term consequences of non-fatal accidents and of diseases incurred in the mine can not be calculated.

To compound the hazards of work, the operation of the mine continued on a seasonal basis. When work was possible, life was dangerous. When work was not available, life was hard. The operation of the mine tended to follow the seasons. As demand for coal increased during the fall so too did production. Anne Krall was born in Sublet. She later wrote about her family's experience: "Her family homesteaded their ranch in Fontenelle basin the summer time, then in winter time they moved into their home in Sublet, Wyoming - where [her] dad worked in the coal mines to make ends meet."<sup>56</sup> While production increases in the fall meant more work, production slow-downs or stoppages in the spring could have the opposite effect. In one instance the company issued a public statement indicating that lay-offs would be avoided by transferring workers from No. 6 to other Kemmerer Coal Company mines:

Contrary to a report which has been more or less widely circulated there have been no men laid off by the Kemmerer Coal Company. It is true that two mines, Nos. 4 and 6 have been closed down, but in each case, whenever the men cared to be transferred to either Mine No. 1 or 5, the transfer has been made without the loss of employment to anyone. It was deemed inadvisable to continue the operation of the two mines closed down, as the consolidation of work has been made without decreasing the output and the output can be more efficiently handled from the two mines rather than four. Under the present arrangement, employees at No. 6 may be transferred to No. 5 and those men who have been at No. 4 may work at No. 1.<sup>57</sup>

Pay for workers at the Sublet No. 6 mine, like that at other mines of the Kemmerer Coal Company, was settled through collective bargaining. The United Mine Workers of America had become firmly established in southwest Wyoming along the Union Pacific in 1907 and in the Kemmerer area the next year.<sup>58</sup> While the contract was negotiated centrally between the UMWA and the Southern Wyoming Coal Operators' Association--a syndicate of mining companies--the wages varied from mine to mine because of

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<sup>56</sup>Jacob W. And Alice Antilla, History of the Upper Hamsfork Valley ([Kemmerer, WY], 1974), 25.

<sup>57</sup>Kemmerer Camera, April 6, 1921.

<sup>58</sup>Gardner and Flores, Forgotten Frontier, 117-118.

grade of coal and width of seam. In 1916 pick mining at Sublet No. 6 was paid \$.57 per ton. The contract also noted, however, that "Coal under 4 feet to be paid in excess of regular scale, 1/2 cent per ton per inch for each inch less than 4 feet. Coal under 3 feet to be considered deficient work and to be settled locally."<sup>59</sup> There were other workers at the mine besides the miners. Those who worked underground but did not dig coal were known as company men. These were the ropersiders and trackmen and drivers and timbermen and other laborers who were part of the infrastructure supporting the extraction of coal. In 1920 a dispute arose over the pay these company men received compared to the miners and the UMWA forced the issue with the company men being entitled to a pay increase of \$1.50 per day retroactive to the beginning of the season--August 16.<sup>60</sup>

The other side of the pay matrix, however, had to do with the cost of living. Workers lived at either the camp at Mine No. 6 or at the village of Sublet. The population at the mine itself is nowhere listed, although the town of Sublet, about three miles away, held a population of 347 in 1910, of 524 in 1915, of 408 in 1920, and 481 in 1925.<sup>61</sup> There were some small clusters of homes between, such as the Japanese camp directly between Sublet No. 6 and No. 5.<sup>62</sup> But regardless of their address, the workers at these mines lived in a company town. While it can sometimes be observed that the most severe aspect of the company town is its paternalism, at Sublet No. 6 the total effect was to keep individuals in thrall to the company. As Dudley Gardner and Verla Flores express it, "Mining companies, such as Kemmerer Coal, attempted to control as much of the surrounding mining community as possible. Everything from water and food to housing was provided by the company."<sup>63</sup> The houses were owned by the

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<sup>59</sup>Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of Wyoming, 1916, 60-61.

<sup>60</sup>Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of Wyoming, 1920, 6.

<sup>61</sup>The Census of the State of Wyoming, 1915, 10; Wyoming State Census, 1925, 4.

<sup>62</sup>The only definite reference to this camp, which appears well known locally, is in a comment on the installation of a new bath house but with the observation that the workers use it to clean after work, except for the Japanese, "who bathe in a separate bath house, which was installed some years ago at the Japanese camp." Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of Wyoming, 1924, 6-7.

<sup>63</sup>Gardner and Flores, Forgotten Frontier, 78.

company and workers paid rent to the company. Their children went to school at a school built by the company. Mrs. William Harris, whose father worked in the mines, was born at the town of Sublet in a company house. She lived at No. 6 for three years and started school there in the one room school.<sup>64</sup> And they purchased their food and supplies at the company store.

Perhaps the company store is one of the most important institutions at Sublet Mine No. 6. While it may appear to be on the peripheries of the mine extraction process, it was an essential part of the organization of the business of mining. The Frontier Supply Company, owned by the Kemmerer Coal Company, was everywhere the miners were and it made provisions readily available to the workers and their families. With the isolation of the mines and with the absence of transportation, a ready and captive market was available for the store. As to the prices charged by the Frontier Supply Company, the interview with Mr. and Mrs. Harris is revealing:

MH: Well, their prices was high.

H: Oh, God, a whole bunch.<sup>65</sup>

There was one factor, however, that complicates this picture of the company store. As Mr. Harris generously noted, "That's one thing with the company store, you got down with the flu bad they still carried you. It made no difference."<sup>66</sup> A form of credit was provided at the company store. In 1910 Wyoming law prohibited the payment of workers in scrip; such payment had been the custom not only here but broadly. Of course that scrip was redeemable only in company stores. It provided a way to increase profits by assuring that workers purchased goods from the same company that paid them. Scrip, or coupons, continued to be used at Sublet No. 6, but they were used to extend credit.<sup>67</sup> Again, Mrs. Harris:

But when my dad worked every day, then he could draw a coupon for that day. But they would keep so much of it to pay on the bill and he could have so much food. He finally got out of debt. You know, you'd pay it up and

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<sup>64</sup>Gardner and Rosenberg, Interview with Mrs. William Harris, 209-211.

<sup>65</sup>Gardner and Rosenberg, Interview with Mr. and Mrs. Harris, 215.

<sup>66</sup>Gardner and Flores, Interview with William Harris, 216.

<sup>67</sup>For examples of the coupons see Smith, "Economic History of the Coal Industry," 36.

he could say charge it. I think you learned better because he'd make so much a day and he'd draw so much of that coupon. And you could buy so much that day on that coupon and the rest went onto your bill.<sup>68</sup>

Not everybody found their way out of debt. Indeed, the coupons were the prime form of currency at the store and could well have encouraged the accumulation of debt. Business records for the Frontier Supply Company store at Sublet No. 6 for the years 1914-1916, a period of twenty-eight months, provides a record of daily sales at the No. 6 Store and divides the total in sales by coupons and sales by cash. For the twenty-eight months of records in the ledger, the store sold \$12,275.49 in cash sales and \$74,574.65 in coupon sales. Only sixteen percent of the sales were cash sales.<sup>69</sup> Perhaps the starkest example of the consequences of this indebtedness to the company store can be found in the case of Matt Wisniewski, one of the victims of the powder house explosion of 1920. While the records of the company show the dependents of other victims being paid various sums for settlement upon the death of the miners, beside Wisniewski's name in two account books is the notation that \$1000 was paid to the Frontier Supply Company.<sup>70</sup> It is not clear if this settled the debt.

Just as the activities of Sublet Mine No. 6 included various specialized endeavors, and just as the miners underground required the support of an elaborate infrastructure that ranged from the provision of cars for the coal they mined to the air they breathed, the infrastructure on the surface constituted an equally integrated and specialized set of activities designed to enhance not just the production of coal but the profitability of the enterprise engaged in mining.

## VI. PROGRESS AND DECLINE

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<sup>68</sup>Gardner and Rosenberg, Interview with Mrs. William Harris, 214.

<sup>69</sup>Monthly Statements of Sales for Frontier Supply Company Stores, 1914-1916, Kemmerer Coal Company Collection. Wyoming Department of Commerce, Historical Research Division Collections. Each store, including No. 6 Store, is separate.

<sup>70</sup>Ledger Book, Report of Accidents, 1915-1960, 14, and Ledger Book, "Accidents in Kemmerer Coal Company Mines" 1912-1935, Kemmerer Coal Company Collection, Fossil Country Futures Museum, Kemmerer, Wyoming.

The economic life of Sublet Mine No. 6, with its ebbs and flows and rise and fall, reflects the boom-bust cycle that has plagued the Wyoming economy since the days of the fur trade. Born in the halcyon days of coal production following a decade in which coal production in the state had literally doubled, indeed, the next decade also proved to be a period of growth.<sup>71</sup> But it was not continuous and sustained growth. At Sublet No. 6, production rose and sometimes faltered. In 1914, the first year in which the mine recorded production, No. 6 produced 107,880 tons. Nearby No. 5 produced 249,261 tons by comparison. This should not be surprising given the comments of the Inspector for district number one, that "there was a decreased output of the mines during the year, due to the depression in business which was general in the coal mining industry. As a result of this depression, many men have been thrown out of employment entirely, while those retained have been reduced to half time, or less, a condition which has brought hardships to families and individuals alike."<sup>72</sup>

From the perspective of the following year, however, 1914 must have appeared bright. In 1915 Sublet Mine No. 6 produced only 21,262 tons of coal and it operated a total of only thirty-five days in the year.<sup>73</sup> That was the bottom of the slough of despond, however, as the general depression, or panic as it was then known, lifted in 1916. In 1916, Sublet No. 6 reached production of 176,638 tons and that year, not just for this mine, marked "the most successful fiscal year in the history of coal mining in the district," according to the state inspector. The inspector even lamented the scarcity of men for the mines.<sup>74</sup> Although the mines did not operate on Christmas, 1916, the Kemmerer Coal Company mines did work Sunday, Christmas Eve, an unusual step.<sup>75</sup> By 1917, it was plain that a boom was underway, and, of course, the country entered a wartime economic surge. That year, the mine produced a record 244,697 tons, outstripping for the first time the No. 5 mine to the north which only

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<sup>71</sup>Gardner and Flores, Forgotten Frontier, 100, 126.

<sup>72</sup>Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of Wyoming, 1914, 3.

<sup>73</sup>Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of Wyoming, 1915, 22.

<sup>74</sup>Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of Wyoming, 1916, 41, 5-6.

<sup>75</sup>Kemmerer Camera, December 27, 1916,



produced 228,010.<sup>76</sup>

The mixed blessings of increased demand emerged during 1918. In that year in the district, coal production hit a new record. This had to do with the effort, as the state inspector saw it, "to meet the demand that was so necessary to bring the war to a victorious conclusion." Given the demographics of the worker population at the mines, it is by no means obvious that everybody digging coal shared the inspector's motivation. The state inspector also noted that "each mine was taxed to their utmost," and "the mines have been working full time, with a scarcity of men." No. 6 was at an advantage, having established itself, for the new mines that were being opened suffered most from the labor shortage. Production at Sublet No. 6 in 1918 was 177,513 tons.<sup>77</sup>

If the World War I and preparations for war prior to it had stimulated the economy, which thereby stimulated demand for coal, the end of the war had the opposite effect. In 1919 Sublet Mine No. 6 produced only 140,270 tons.<sup>78</sup> Times had changed. No longer could steady, continual growth be assumed. The following year, 1920, the district bounced back and managed to produce a record amount of coal, but Sublet No. 6 increased its production only slightly with 142,381 tons coming through the slope to the outside world.<sup>79</sup> The resurgence was shortlived. Shortly after the beginning of 1921, demand fell and the state inspector reported that "a number of mines shut down entirely while the remainder only worked an average of 2 1/2 days per week." In the fall when a rail strike was anticipated, production surged briefly then slumped: "the mines working four days per week were able to fill all orders with a surplus of coal to spare."<sup>80</sup> The record is unclear, but it may be that Sublet Mine No. 6 was in the group that closed, or almost completely closed. In August of 1921 the Kemmerer Republican reported that the Kemmerer Coal Company was preparing to resume operations at No. 6, "which has been almost entirely shut down for many months." It was, at any rate, more than the usual seasonal closure. On August 10, Gomer

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<sup>76</sup>Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of Wyoming, 1917, 5, 28.

<sup>77</sup>Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of Wyoming, 1918, 5, 40.

<sup>78</sup>Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of Wyoming, 1919, 39.

<sup>79</sup>Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of Wyoming, 1920, 49.

<sup>80</sup>Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of Wyoming, 1921, 5.

Reese, Superintendent for the Kemmerer Coal Company mines wrote newspapers that "I wish to inform you that our No. 6 mine, Sublet, Wyo., will be prepared to reopen on the morning of August 16, and will be able to place from 175 to 200 miners between then and the first of September, or as fast as we can clean up working places for the men."<sup>81</sup> Once the mine opened and began producing again, its tonnage for the year was recorded at 81,423 for the remaining four and a half months.<sup>82</sup>

The spurt of mining activity that began in the fall of 1921, however, did not last. A strike that lasted five months, that included Sublet No. 6, brought district production down to "the lowest output in thirteen years." The state inspector noted that the strike was expected and that production declined in March "as the miners began leaving the district and by the first of April it would be safe to say that fifty per cent of the people had left the mining camps." Then, once work resumed, demand was down. So the mines in the fall worked on short time. The result for mine production was that this mine in 1922 produced 118,822 tons of coal.<sup>83</sup> Only because of that work stoppage did the 1923 production seem to climb. In 1923 No. 6 produced 178,863 tons.<sup>84</sup> Production plummeted the next year and No. 6 was listed as one of eight mines idle part of 1924. Production that year was a meager 47,529 tons. The state mine inspector attributed this decline to "poor market conditions."<sup>85</sup>

In fact, a depression was settling in that would be a long time leaving, that was connected to core parts of the nation's economy, and that contributed to the demise of Sublet No. 6. The price Kemmerer Coal Company received for its coal in 1924, \$2.92 per ton, was a five year low.<sup>86</sup> In 1925 the mine operated a total of seventy days, from September through December, producing 31,604.75 tons with a capacity of only five hundred tons a day--

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<sup>81</sup>Kemmerer Republican, August 19, 1921.

<sup>82</sup>Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of Wyoming, 1921, 45.

<sup>83</sup>Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of Wyoming, 1922, 5, 41.

<sup>84</sup>Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of Wyoming, 1923, 5, 36.

<sup>85</sup>Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of Wyoming, 1924, 5, 12, 27.

<sup>86</sup>Smith, "Economic History of the Coal Industry," 105.

less than the capacity of the mine when it opened.<sup>87</sup> Coal prices had climbed during 1925 and remained high (\$3.19 and \$3.18 per ton respectively) and the mine was in production virtually all of 1926. With an output of 163,177.2 tons in 1926, Sublet Mine No. 6 produced more than it had since 1923.<sup>88</sup> As 1927 opened, the mine only operated fifteen days in January, then dropped to seven in February, and then worked fourteen in March and thirteen in April. In May, 1927, the mine operated only five days. When it produced its 31,576.9 tons in 1927, the Kemmerer Coal Company's Sublet Mine No. 6 had produced its last coal. The mine was then listed as idle in 1928 (1928 prices almost duplicated the low 1924 level), and then dropped from the list of reporting mines.<sup>89</sup> The official reason for closing No. 6 was "reserve exhausted."<sup>90</sup> The Kemmerer Coal Company replaced the production at this mine with a new mine, Gomer, named after Gomer Reese who had supervised No. 6 and other Kemmerer Coal Company mines. Over the period 1913 to 1927, the No. 6 Mine had produced 1,684,040 tons of coal.<sup>91</sup>

#### VII. SUBLET MINE NO. 6 IN 1993

During the 1920s coal mining in Wyoming suffered from the results of an unstable market and at the same time had endeavored to modernize its equipment to cut labor costs. Sublet Mine No. 6 demonstrates this pattern, but because of the depletion of accessible coal and the decline in prices it could not continue.

Most of its equipment was dismantled and moved to other

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<sup>87</sup>Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of Wyoming, 1925, 11, 16.

<sup>88</sup>Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of Wyoming, 1926, 6.

<sup>89</sup>Annual Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, State of Wyoming, 1927, 12.

<sup>90</sup>Smith, "Economic History of the Coal Industry," 104.

<sup>91</sup>This total differs from that listed in Smith, "Economic History of the Coal Industry," 103 because, apparently the production for the last three months of calendar year 1919 were not included in Smith's computation. In that year, the inspector's reports switched from a fiscal year that ran from October 1 to September 30 to a calendar year, so a separate report for those three months was included after the 1919 fiscal year report.

sites. Virtually nothing is left of the tippie and its footprint is hard to detect. The housing has disappeared except for foundation remnants in one row (see photos HAER No. WY-54-H to WY-54-N). The fan house still demonstrates the careful workmanship in the stone walls that would direct and regulate the flow of air pulled through the mine (see photo HAER No. WY-54-C-7). The Stevens ten foot fan rests on a small brace, long since having turned its last revolution (see photo HAER No. WY-54-C-3). The massive steel doors in the building, also to regulate the flow of air, remain. One door lifts vertically on hinges (see photo HAER No. WY-54-C-5) while the others open and close to left and right (see photo HAER No. WY-54-C-6). The two boilers from the engine house are removed and lay disheveled above and beside the stone walls on three sides of the engine house. One foundation with windows still holding bars for security could have been the company store, but this is speculative (see photo HAER No. WY-54-G-1; HAER No. WY-54-G-2). To the south of the site a slab of concrete, sometimes said to have been the roof of the powder house that exploded in 1920, lies on the ground. Of the portals, the manway--the entrance to the south--is crumbling (see photo HAER No. WY-54-A-1). All slopes are sealed by cave-ins. The defining remnants of the entire site can quickly be appreciated from two critical perspectives. The main slope still bears the name of the mine on its arch at the portal, "No. 6 1913," (see photo HAER No. WY-54-B-2) although vandals have done their best to remove the letters and numbers. From that portal, the view of the eastern side of the valley becomes comprehensible as the hoist house rises prominently ahead and as other foundations fit into place. Directly across the valley and above the site stand three walls of the hoist house like a cathedral dominating the valley (see photo HAER No. WY-54-D-1). Indeed, the view of the site from the hoist house, especially straight across to the slope that used to release the coal from the mine's grid of subterranean rooms and entries and haulages (see photo HAER No. WY-54-2), is a view that captures most of what remains of Sublet Mine No. 6. And what remains is a reminder of a vibrant but remote period of economic growth and decline, of technology and mechanical power, of the socially powerful and the powerless, of worlds of light and darkness, of diverse populations mixing and laboring, of deep tragedy and sorrow, and of dreams, disappointments, and hardships.